



## Beginning an Exhibit Project

By Polly Nordstrand,  
Staff Curator, Museum Design, HFC-EX

A first step in beginning an exhibit project with Harpers Ferry Center is to write the Project Agreement.

The **Project Agreement** consolidates primary information and agreements related to a project. It provides team members and managers with clear information on the scope of the project.

The Agreement includes:

- Project Agreement Policy
- Approvals
- Project Background
- Project Work Plan
- Project Team
- Schedule
- Budget



### Approval Process

Approving officials listed on the Approval page will e-mail approval memos to HFC. If either party requires handwritten signatures, original signature pages will be stored at the HFC Programs Office.

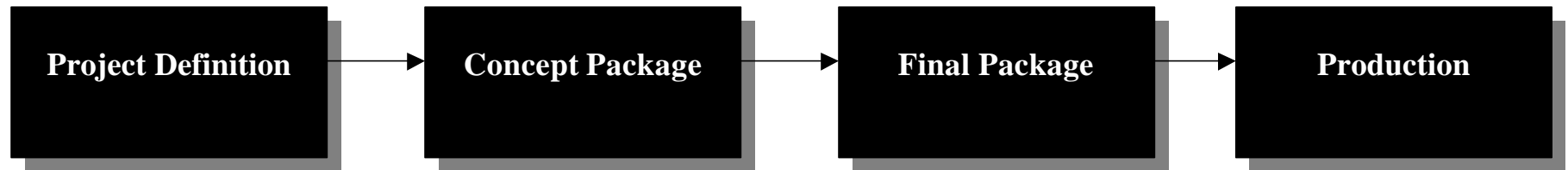
Generally the approving officials include the Park Superintendent, HFC manager, HFC Associate Manager, and Regional Director.

### Amendment Process

This Agreement can be amended informally by e-mail between HFC and the Park. If either party desires major revisions, a new or amended Agreement should be prepared and approved. The Addendum page of the Agreement can be used for revisions.

## Work Flow: Exhibit Planning, Design and Production

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### Project Definition Phase

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- Conduct Field Study
- Determine Objectives
- Assess Roles and Responsibilities
- Prepare Project Agreement
- Conduct Front-end Evaluation
- Develop Resource Package
- Conduct General Research
- Prepare Schematic Design Plan

### Concept Package Phase

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- Attend Exhibit Workshop
- Conduct Focussed Research
- Prepare Concept Package
- Develop Exhibit Design
- Draft Audiovisual Treatments
- Write Draft Exhibit Label
- Conduct Formative Evaluation

### Final Package Phase

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- Resolve Planning & Design Issues
- Prepare Final Package
- Develop Planning Database
- Prepare Graphics Package
- Develop Digital Layout Files
- Write Audiovisual Treatments
- Prepare Exhibit Drawings
- Write Final Exhibit Text

### Production Phase

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- Prepare Production Documents/Samples
- Revise Digital Layout Files
- Participate in Inspections
- Fabrication of Exhibit Structures
- Installation
- Conduct Summative Evaluation

## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Selecting a Project Team

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The **Project Team** is made up of a variety of individuals who bring to the project expertise in a number of fields.

The Team might include all or some of the following:

- Park Interpreters
- Exhibit Planner
- Exhibit Designer
- Exhibit Producer
- Audio-visual Producer
- Content Experts
- Park Partners
- Education Specialist
- Museum Curator
- Conservator
- Architect
- Project Manager
- Project Coordinator
- COTR



### **Park Interpreters**

Park Interpreters participate in developing the exhibits by providing content expertise, participating in planning meetings, identifying themes, identifying exhibit objectives, identifying exhibit resources, conducting research, and reviewing planning documents for accuracy. Park Interpreters very often know audience needs and expectations.

### **Exhibit Planner**

The principal role of the Exhibit Planner is to develop the exhibit content. The Planner will execute or coordinate project research, label writing, plan document preparation, and identify graphics and display objects for use in the exhibits.

### **Exhibit Designer**

The principal role of the Exhibit Designer is to work with the team to develop the overall exhibit plan, the physical content of the exhibit and design plan document preparation. The Designer also works closely with the Producer in the Production Phase.

### **Exhibit Producer**

The principal role of the Producer is to oversee the fabrication of the exhibits. The Producer works with the team to develop schedules and budgets throughout the planning and design process.

### **Audio-visual Producer**

The principal role of the AV Producer is to develop all audio-visual treatments. The AV Producer advises the Team on schedule and budget requirements related to AV treatments.

## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Selecting a Project Team

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### Content Experts

Content Experts can provide the Team with the “big picture” as well as review the content for accuracy. Content experts participate in planning meetings and review plan documents.

### Park Partners

Very often parks join into collaborative projects with a variety of partners. It is important for the Park to identify the role of the partners and their expectation of involvement. The Project Coordinator for the Park is responsible for maintaining communication with the partners.

### Education Specialist

Where education objectives have been identified, it is important for the Team to involve an Education Specialist. Their role is to inform the team and evaluate the content toward the project objectives.

### Museum Curator

The principal role of the Museum Curator is to advise the Team on the availability of artifacts for exhibit and to provide information about the objects.

### Conservator

The principal role of the Conservator is to advise the Team on all aspects of exhibiting artifacts, including the suitability of objects, environmental and theft concerns. The Conservator examines and evaluates each object, and recommends conservation treatment.

### Architect

Architects play varying roles in exhibit development. An architect may already be involved if building construction is involved. An architect may be needed if the facility requires rehab. The architect advises the Team about the facility.



### Project Manager

Depending on the scope, a project may require a Project Manager. The principal role of the Manager is to coordinate meetings, schedules and oversee budgets. It is also the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that communication is taking place among the Team members during all phases of the project.

### Project Coordinators

Both the park and HFC designate a single person who is the main contact for their location. They assist in the arrangement of meetings, review all project documents, collect and condense comments, and resolve issues of content, budget, and schedule.

### Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR)

The principal role of a COTR is to write and oversee contracts for planning, design and fabrication. The COTR is the main contact for the Contractor.

## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Determining a Project Schedule

A well planned **Project Schedule** is an important factor in the initiation of an exhibit project.

The main events of a project are:

- Project Agreement Approved
- Exhibit Planning Workshop
- Schematic Design Completed
- Concept Plan Completed
- Final Plan Completed
- Fabrication Contract Awarded
- Exhibit Installed

*Before deciding on a completion date, it is important to evaluate your project thoroughly. Important points to consider in the process are:*

- Staff availability
- DAB requirements
- Evaluation
- Consultation requirements
- Partner expectations
- Object conservation
- Building construction or rehab



### **Staff Availability**

Park staff play an important part in the progress of an exhibit project. Their contributions as content experts are vital to the planning and design process.

Park staff are required to thoroughly review and comment on planning and design documents.

*In developing a Project Schedule, evaluate staff availability during the time periods when their participation is required. Is this the park's busy season? Is this a time when administrative duties would occupy their attention?*

### **Development Advisory Board**

The Park is responsible for determining their obligations to report to the DAB. Generally, all facility-related projects that involve more than \$500,000 must be presented to the DAB. HFC can assist the Park in conducting a Value Analysis and developing presentation material.

When the project involves building construction or rehab, the exhibit plans are often included as a part of the project in the presentation. This might take place after the Schematic Design Plan is completed. However, if the review only includes the exhibit project, the presentation would take place after the Concept Package is completed.

*In developing a Project Schedule , determine the time needed to prepare for and participate in a presentation to the DAB.*

## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Determining a Project Schedule

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### Evaluation

While not a regulation, evaluation has repeatedly been noted as an important need. Evaluation is a method of getting feedback throughout the exhibit development process—and after—in order to produce better exhibits. By including evaluation in the process, the Team is reminded to keep the visitor in mind.

The main evaluations that take place are:

- Front-end
- Formative
- Summative

### What can we learn from evaluation?

Through evaluation, the Team can find out the visitors' prior knowledge and interests in a subject. This understanding will provide ideas for connecting with the visitor.

By testing exhibits as they are developed, the Team can assess an exhibit's ability to attract visitors, hold their attention, foster involvement, and communicate messages.

### Definitions:

#### Front-end Evaluation

Evaluation done before exhibition plans are firm to help shape exhibition content, goals, and vocabulary.



#### Formative Evaluation

Evaluation done on mock-ups or prototypes of exhibit elements to test their effectiveness before making a final version. Usually related to parts of the exhibition, not the whole thing.

#### Summative Evaluation

A type of evaluation conducted on the whole exhibition with all its parts in context with actual visiting public after the exhibition is open.

Definitions from:

*Exhibition Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, Beverly Serrell, 1996.

### OMB Requirements

The Office of MB may require approval to conduct the audience research involved in the evaluation process.

*In developing a Project Schedule, determine the time needed to prepare for OMB approval.*

## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Determining a Project Schedule

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### Consultation Requirements

The NPS Management Plan requires that parks actively consult with appropriate native American tribes or groups in the planning, development, and operation of park interpretive programs that relate to the culture and history of a particular tribe or group.

The Park is responsible for determining their obligations to consult with the appropriate tribes.

*In developing a Project Schedule, allow for time to determine the appropriate tribal representatives and schedule meetings. Some tribes may require a review by their Council which have regularly scheduled meetings. Many tribes request 30 days to respond to requests for review.*

### Involving Native Americans in Media Development

Julie Galonska  
Exhibit & Media Specialist  
Cuyahoga Valley National Park

*1. Involve the tribes in all facets of interpretive media design and development. They should be included from the earliest stages of the project so that their input on spatial arrangement, type of media, amount of material, etc. can be considered in planning the visitor center.*

*This was probably our biggest mistake at Fort Smith. We didn't involve the tribes until we were into the concept design phase. It sent the message that the tribes were an afterthought and not full partners in the project. I can't stress enough how important it is to bring the tribes into the process at the very beginning.*

*2. The NPS should have one individual (the point person) dedicated to working with the tribes. Tribal representatives need to know who it is they should call if they have concerns. Likewise, making tribal relations the priority for one NPS staffer will lessen the chances of the tribal viewpoint getting lost amidst all the other chaos of media planning.*

*3. Recognize that the "official" tribal representatives represent only one viewpoint. The NPS deals with federally recognized tribal governments, but within each tribe, factions are likely to exist. To be as inclusive as possible, I think the various viewpoints within tribes should be recognized. However, there is a danger in alienating or offending the official tribal government. The other side of the problem is that if and when the current tribal officials lose power, will the new ones agree with the interpretation? Or will you then have media that the new official tribal government does not agree with and criticizes?*

*4. Involve academic historians/anthropologists/ethnologists in all facets of interpretive media design and development, but recognize that the tribes may not agree with the academic interpretation of their histories and cultures. Again, I see this as a matter of balance and including multiple viewpoints. Academics should also be included from the earliest stages of the project.*

*We had a disconnect at Fort Smith between the academics and the tribes. Basically what happened is that the tribes told their story and we told the entire story that surrounded them. I would have liked more unity in the approach.*

5. *To use a clichè, think outside the box. The NPS is very conservative in its interpretive media techniques. Seems like we're always falling back on exhibit panels and AV programs to do the job for us. While these may turn out to be the most effective and appropriate types of media, I would encourage the planning team to be wildly creative. Different cultures have different ways of learning. How would the tribes present the subject matter to an audience? Can those techniques be incorporated into media development?*

6. *Use creative methods for the review process. The traditional method of sending out the material and asking for written comments may not result in many responses. The NPS point person may need to make individual visits to tribal reps and go through the material with them. Having a group meeting of reviewers where the material is reviewed on a page-by-page basis is another method. Also recognize that the tribes may need 4 to 6 weeks for a review because the material and/or the recommendation of the tribal rep may need to be presented to the tribal council and/or chief. Plan ahead, in other words.*

*At Fort Smith, the sheer volume of material prevented many reviewers from offering comments. But even if we had only a few panels, sending out the text and layouts and waiting for a response would not have been very effective. I think personal contact is the key to getting useful comments back.*

7. *Have thick skin. You're continuing a tradition of relations (which have rarely been good) between the federal government and American Indian tribes. Be prepared for strong emotions and comments that can sometimes sting.*

Julia worked on the development of interpretive media at Fort Smith National Historic Site.



## Beginning An Exhibit Project: Determining a Project Budget

An exhibit **Project Budget** can vary greatly depending on the scope of the project. Generally by the time that HFC is working with on a park on a project, the amount of funding has already been determined, and usually the exhibit space exists. A simple calculation (funds available ÷ square feet of space) informs the Team about the possible complexity of the exhibit. The Team always keeps in mind the design-to limitations of their project.

Main budget costs to consider:

- Planning, design & fabrication contracts
- AV production & equipment
- Graphic acquisition
- HFC salary & travel
- Facility construction or rehab

	C	D
Project Type		Amount
51-EXH		235,000
53-CL		8,571
56-HF		16,267
61-AV		10,000
		269,838
52-EXH		1,230,000
53-CL		100,000
57-HF		115,000
62-AV		75,000
63-EQ		95,000
		85,000
		1,700,000

### Planning & Design

Main budget costs include:

- Planning & design contracts
- AV planning
- Content expert fees
- HFC salary & travel

### Fabrication & Installation

Main budget costs include:

- Fabrication contracts
- AV production
- HFC salary & travel

### Contract Supervision

HFC plans and designs a limited number of projects in house, all others are contracted out. A park may select to plan the exhibit themselves, where HFC would be COTR for the design contract.

Costs for HFC Contract Supervision:

- HFC salary & travel

### Other Costs to Consider

- Preparation for DAB presentation
- Evaluation
- Consultation expenses and fees
- Accessibility requirements
- Improvements based on results of Summative Evaluation
- Artifact acquisition
- Object conservation
- Maintenance contracts

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Polly Nordstrand  
NPS-HFC-EX,IMI  
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